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# The Propaganda Sweepstakes

*Moscow tries harder*

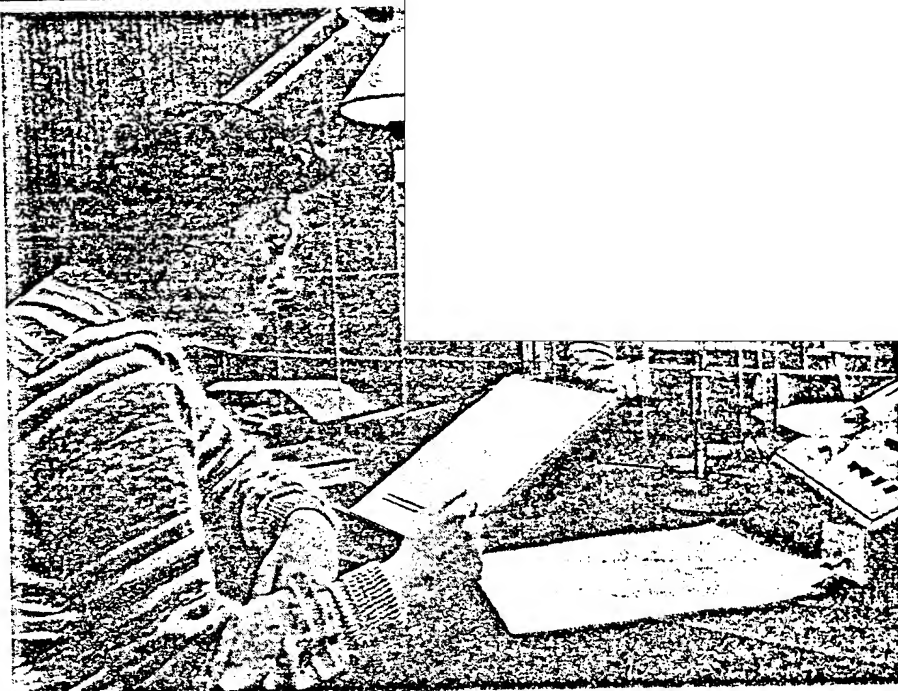
**D**uring the day, Deepak Kumar, 10, goes to school in New Delhi. In the evenings he earns a few rupees brushing ticks off the dogs owned by a local American artist. In response to a question from his boss about his classwork, Deepak boasts: "It's all right. I'm best in my class in Russian. And look, I have a library card." The card he proudly displays admits him to the library at the Soviet embassy. There he can find children's books, as well as tracts on Soviet life. He has no comparable access to American literature. Children who want to borrow books from New Delhi's American center must have their parents get a card. Deepak's folks, both of whom work long days, are unable to make the trip.

Every day, around the globe, the hearts and minds of people like Deepak Kumar—as well as his parents and friends—are reached on a battlefield in the East-West struggle where words are the chief weapons. With their troops occupying Afghanistan and massed to pounce on Poland, the Soviets have a lot to explain these days. Through a propaganda effort perhaps seven times as large as that of the U.S., and with more sophistication than ever before, they are doing just that.

The Central Intelligence Agency estimates that the Soviet Union spends \$3.3 billion annually on propaganda activities of one kind or another. That includes such overt efforts as Radio Moscow's foreign service (\$700 million) and the Communist Party's international activities (\$150 million). It also includes such indirect propaganda efforts as TASS, the Soviet news agency, which spends \$550 million a year spreading Moscow's view of world events to foreign countries. By contrast, the U.S. International Communication Agency (ICA)—which coordinates the Voice of America, cultural exchanges, films, speakers, exhibits and other aspects of U.S. "public diplomacy"—has a budget of only \$448 million. Even if the \$87 million the U.S. spends separately for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty are included, the total is still a small fraction of the Soviet propaganda budget.

In radio broadcasting, this disparity means that American stations broadcast for 1,818 hours a week in 45 languages, mostly to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, while the Soviet Union broadcasts for a total of 2,022 hours a week in 82 languages to virtually every one of the world's 165 countries.

During his presidential campaign, Ronald Reagan spoke of increasing the American propaganda effort, but in this winter of budget



Broadcasting the news from the Munich headquarters of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty

seen. This week the President is expected to name a new head of the ICA. The leading candidate: California Businessman Charles Wick, a close friend who was co-chairman of the Reagan Inauguration Committee.

The Soviet counterpart is Leonid Zamyatin, chief of the Central Committee's International Information Department. He is a former director of TASS who operates under the guidance of the party's longtime chief ideologist, Mikhail Suslov. TASS serves as the backbone of Soviet propaganda. The bluntness of TASS's bias often works against it. For example, the Soviets in 1963 provided, free of charge, equipment for receiving TASS bulletins to the fledgling Kenyan news agency. The Kenyans, however, soon started using the equipment to receive Britain's Reuters wire service as well. A former Kenyan journalist says he was supposed to give equal play to both news services, but that

the TASS material arrived days later than Reuters, and was too late to be usable. The CIA claims that the Soviets often try to plant loyalists in local broadcasting stations so that TASS reports will get better play.

TASS provides most of the material for Radio Moscow, the Soviet version of the Voice of America. In the past two years the broadcasts have been enlivened by sprinkling Soviet-made jazz and rock music recordings among the turgid recitations of editorials. Radio Moscow propaganda is much less vitriolic than the printed press; a Soviet delegation returning from a visit to the U.S. might be quoted by Radio Moscow as saying that the Americans they met share with them an aim of world peace. The broadcasts in English are now particularly subtle, using announcers who try to sound indistinguishable from those on the VOA or England's BBC World service. This new sophistication, however, does not exclude an unfounded allegation here and there. Soviet media actively spread the word, for example, that the U.S. was responsible for the 1978 kidnapping and murder of former Italian Premier Aldo Moro. In addition, events often have to be filtered through an ideological bureaucracy before they are reported. For example, news of the death of former Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin was withheld for 36 hours by TASS and Radio Moscow. Even Soviet citizens heard the news first on Western broadcasts.

The Soviets also make use of "clandestine" radio broadcasts, transmissions that purport to originate from within a particular recipient country but actually come



Deepak Kumar studying Russian in New Delhi